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THE

ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

THE BETROTHAL

Par la grace infinie, Dieu les mist au monde ensemble.
Rousier des Dames.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
M.DCCC.LXIV.

1864

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THE WRITER OF THIS POEM

Inscribes it

TO HIS DAUGHTER EMILY.

CONTENTS.

Page

PROLOGUE 11

I. THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE 19

The Accompaniments.

1. Love's Reality 21
2. Love's Immortality 22
3. The Poet's Confidence 23
4. The Poet's Humility 24
5. The Sentences 25

Idyl I. The Cathedral Close 27

II. MARY AND MILDRED 35

The Accompaniments.

1. The Paragon 37
2. The Sentences 43

Idyl II. Mary and Mildred 45

III. HONORIA 51

The Accompaniments.

1. The Lover 53
2. The Sentences 58

Idyl III. Honoria 59

Page

IV. The Morning Call 65
The Accompaniments.
1. The Rose of the World..... 67
2. The Tribute 70
3. The Sentences..... 71
Idyl IV. The Morning Call..... 73

V. The Violets..... 77
The Accompaniments.
1. The Parallel..... 79
2. The Sentences..... 84
Idyl V. The Violets 85

VI. The Dean 91
The Accompaniments.
1. Frost in Harvest..... 93
2. Love Justified..... 95
3. Perfect Love rare..... 96
4. The Sentences..... 98
Idyl VI. The Dean..... 99

VII. Ætna and the Moon..... 105
The Accompaniments.
1. The Queen..... 107
2. The Sentences..... 110
Idyl VII. Ætna and the Moon..... 111

VIII. Sarum Plain..... 117
The Accompaniments.

Page

1. Present Good contemned..... 119
2. The Revelation..... 120
3. Love in Idleness..... 121
4. The Tempest..... 122
5. Love in Tears..... 123
6. The Sentences..... 124

Idyl VIII. Sarum Plain..... 125

IX. The Railway..... 131

The Accompaniments.

1. The Miscreant..... 133
2. The Wife's Tragedy..... 135
3. The Sentences..... 137

Idyl IX. The Railway..... 139

X. Going to Church..... 145

The Accompaniments.

1. The Gracious Chivalry..... 147
2. Love Liberal..... 150
3. The Sentences..... 153

Idyl X. Going to Church..... 155

XI. The Ball..... 163

The Accompaniments.

1. The Daughter of Eve..... 165
2. The Sentences..... 169

Idyl XI. The Ball..... 171

Page
XII. The Abdication..... 177
The Accompaniments.
1. The Chace..... 179
2. The Sentences..... 185
Idyl XII. The Abdication..... 187
The Epilogue..... 195

PROLOGUE.

THE PROLOGUE.

MINE is no winged horse to gain
"The region of the spheral chime
"He does but drag a rumbling wain,
"Cheer'd by the silver bells of rhyme.
"And if, at Fame's bewitching note,
"My homely Pegasus pricks an ear,
"The world's cart-collar hugs his throat,
"And he's too wise to kick or rear."
Thus ever answer'd Vaughan his wife,
Who, more than he, desired his fame;
But secretly his thoughts were rife
How for her sake to earn a name.

With College laurels three times crown'd,
And other annual honours won,
If he but chose to be renown'd,
He might, he had little doubt, she none:
And, in a loftier phrase, he talk'd
With her upon their Wedding-Day,
While thro' the new-mown meads they walk'd,
Their children shouting by the way:
" Not careless of the gift of song,
" Nor out of love with noble fame,
" I, meditating much and long
" What I should sing, how win a name,
" Considering well what theme unsung,
" What reason worth the cost of rhyme,
" Remains to loose the Poet's tongue
" In these last days, the dregs of time,
" Learn that to me, though born so late,
" There does, beyond desert, befall
" (May my great fortune make me great!)
" The first of themes sung last of all.

"In green and undiscover'd ground,
"Yet near where many others sing,
"I have the very well-head found
"Whence gushes the Pierian Spring."
Then she: "What is it, Dear? The Life
"Of Arthur, or Jerusalem's Fall?"
"Neither: your gentle self, my wife,
"Yourself, and love that's all in all.
"And if I faithfully proclaim
"Of these the exceeding worthiness,
"Surely, the sweetest wreath of Fame
"Shall, to your hope, my brows caress;
"And if, by virtue of my choice
"Of the most bosom-touching theme
"That ever tuned a poet's voice,
"I live, as now I dare to dream,
"To be delight to future days,
"And into silence only cease
"With those great Bards who shared their bays
"With Laura and with Beatrice,

" Imagine, Love, how learned men
" Will deep-conceived devices find,
" Beyond the purpose and the ken
" Of the old Poet's simple mind!
" You, Sweet, his Mistress, Wife, and Muse,
" Were you for mortal Woman meant?
" Your praises give a hundred clues
" To mythological intent!
" And, severing thus the truth from trope,
" In you the Commentators see,
" Some Faith, some Charity, some Hope,
" Some, wiser, think you all the three.
" I press your arm! These are the meads
" In which we pass our peaceful days;
" There Avon runs, now hid with reeds,
" Now brightly brimming pebbly bays;
" Those are our children's songs that come
" With bells and bleatings of the sheep;
" And there, in yonder happy home,
" We thrive on mortal food and sleep."

She laugh'd. How proud she always was
To see how proud he was of her!
Then, arguing high artistic laws,
Long did they o'er the plan confer.
'Twas fix'd, with much on both sides said,
The Song should have no incidents,
They are so dull, and pall, twice read:
Its scope should be the heart's events:
Their Salisbury, for the verse unfit,
They settled last should Sarum be;
And, not to wake their neighbour's wit,
He Felix, and Honoria she.

His purpose with performance crown'd,
To her, kind critic, he rehears'd,
When next their Wedding-Day came round,
His leisure's labour, "Book the First."

I.

THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Love's Reality.

I WALK, I trust, with open eyes:
I've travell'd half my worldly course;
And in the way behind me lies
Much vanity and some remorse;
I've lived to feel how pride may part
Spirits tho' match'd like hand and glove;
I've blush'd for love's abode, the heart,
But have not disbelieved in love;
And love is my reward; for now,
When most of deadening time complain,
The myrtle is green upon my brow,
Its odour sweet within my brain.

II.

Love's Immortality.

HOW vilely 'twere to misdeserve
The Poet's gift of perfect speech,
In song to explore, with trembling nerve,
The limit of its utmost reach,
Only to sound the unworthy praise
Of what to-morrow shall not be;
So mocking with immortal bays
The cross-bones of mortality!
I do not thus. My faith is fast
That all the loveliness I sing
Is made to outsleep the mortal blast,
And blossom in a better Spring.
My creed declares the ceaseless pact
Of body and spirit, soul and sense;
Nor can my faith accept the fact,
And fly the various consequence.

III.

The Poet's Confidence.

THE richest realm of all the Earth
Is counted still a heathen Land:
Lo, I, like Joshua, now go forth
To give it into Israel's hand.
I've girt myself with thought and prayer,
And am endow'd with strength, like him,
Beyond my own, and will not fear
The false and foolish Anakim;
Nor will I hearken blame or praise;
For so should I dishonour do
To that sweet Power by which these Lays
Alone are lovely, good and true;
Nor credence to the world's cries give,
Which ever preach and still prevent
Pure passion's high prerogative
To make not follow precedent.

IV.

The Poet's Humility.

NOR verse, nor art, nor plot, nor plan,
Nor aught of mine here's worth a toy:
Quit praise and blame, and, if you can,
Do, Critic, for the nonce, enjoy.
Moving but as the feelings move,
I run, or loiter with delight,
Or stop to mark where gentle Love
Persuades the soul from height to height.
Yet, know, that, though my words are gay
As David's dance, which Michal scorn'd,
If rightly you peruse the Lay,
You shall be sweetly help'd and warn'd.

The Sentences.

1.

LOVE, kiss'd by Wisdom, wakes twice Love,
And Wisdom is, through loving, wise:
Let Dove and Snake, and Snake and Dove,
This Wisdom's be, that Love's device.

2.

'Tis truth (although this truth's a star
Too deep-enskied for all to see),
As Poets of grammar, Lovers are
The well-heads of morality.

3.

"Keep measure in love?" More light befall
Thy sanctity, and make it less!
Be sure I will not love at all
Where I may not love with excess.

THE BETROTHAL.

IDYL I.

THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE.

1.

ONCE more I came to Sarum Close,
With joy half memory half desire,
And breathed the sunny wind that rose
And blew the shadows o'er the Spire,
And toss'd the lilac's scented plumes,
And sway'd the chestnut's thousand cones,

And fill'd my nostrils with perfumes,
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,
And wafted down the serious strain
Of Sarum bells, when, true to time,
I reach'd the Dean's with heart and brain
That trembled to the trembling chime.

2.

'Twas half my home six years ago:
The six years had not alter'd it:
Red-brick and ashlar, long and low,
With dormers and with oriels lit;
Geranium, lychnis, rose array'd
The windows, all wide open thrown;
And some one in the Study play'd
The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn.
And there it was I last took leave:
'Twas Christmas: I remember'd now
The cruel girls, who feign'd to grieve,
Took all the Christmas down; and how

The laurel into blazes woke
The fire, lighting the large, low room,
A dim, rich lustre of old oak
And crimson velvet's glowing gloom.

3.

No change had touch'd my Guardian. Kind,
By widowhood more than winters bent,
And settled in a cheerful mind,
As still foreboding heaven's content.
Well might he mourn, from her delay'd!
I yet recall'd her air, her walk,
Her laugh, mere love; in all she said,
I heard a peaceful seraph talk.
She seem'd expressly sent below
To teach our erring minds to see
The rhythmic change of time's swift flow
As part of calm eternity.
Her life, all honour, observed, with awe
Which cross experience could not mar,

The fiction of the Christian Law
That all men honourable are;
And so her smile seem'd to confer
At once high flattery and reproof,
And self-regard, inspired by her,
Grew courtly in its own behoof.
The years, so far from doing her wrong,
Anointed her with gracious balm,
And made her brows more and more young
With wreaths of amaranth and palm.

4.

Was this her eldest, Honor, the prude
Who would not let me pull the swing;
Who, kiss'd at Christmas, call'd me rude,
And sobb'd alone, and would not sing?
How changed! In shape no more a Grace,
But Venus: milder than the dove:
Her mother's air; her Norman face;
Her large sweet eyes, clear lakes of love.

Mary I knew. In former time
Ailing and pale, she thought that bliss
Was only for a better clime,
And, heavenly overmuch, scorn'd this.
I, rash with theories of the right,
Which stretch'd the tether of my Creed,
But did not break it, held delight
Half discipline. We disagreed.
She told the Dean I wanted grace.
Now she was kindest of the three,
And two wild roses deck'd her face.
And, what, was this my Mildred, she
To herself and all a sweet surprise?
My Pet, who romp'd and roll'd a hoop?
I wonder'd where those daisy eyes
Had found their touching curve and droop.

5.

Unmannerly times! But now we sat
Stranger than strangers; till I caught

And answer'd Mildred's smile; and that
Spread to the rest, and freedom brought.
The Dean talk'd little, but look'd on,
Of three such daughters justly vain:
What letters they had had from Bonn!
Said Mildred; and I told again
How the Bonn boys besieged the house,
In fury metaphysical,
Because I'd proved their Doctor Strauss
A myth, and not a man at all.
By Honor I was kindly task'd
To explain my never coming down,
'Twixt terms, from Cambridge; Mary ask'd
Were Kant and Goethe yet outgrown?
And, pleased, we talk'd the old days o'er;
And, parting, I for pleasure sigh'd.
To be there as a friend. (since more,)
Seem'd then, seems still, excuse for pride;
For something that abode endued
With temple-like repose, an air

Of life's kind purposes pursued
With order'd freedom sweet and fair.
A tent pitch'd in a world not right
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
On tranquil faces bore the light
Of duties beautifully done,
And humbly, though they had few peers,
Kept their own laws, which seem'd to be
The fair sum of six thousand years'
Traditions of civility.

II.

MARY AND MILDRED.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Paragon.

1.

WHEN I behold the reckless brook
That casts itself from some tall crag,
Leaving its shade along the rock,
And wavering lower, like a flag;
When I behold the skies aloft,
Passing the pageantry of dreams;
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
A couch for nuptial Juno seems;
When I behold the mountains bright;
The shadowy vales with feeding herds,

I from my lyre the music smite,
Nor want for justly matching words:
All powers of the sea and air;
All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
That who hath felt may feel again;
Nay more, the gracious Muses bless
At times my tongue until I can,
With moving emphasis, express
The likeness of the perfect man.
Elated oft by such free songs,
I think with utterance free to raise
That Hymn for which the whole world longs,
A worthy Hymn in Woman's praise;
A Hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
Arousing these song-sleepy times
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.
But when I look on her and hope
To tell with joy what I admire,

My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
Or in the feeble birth expire:
No skill'd complexity of speech,
No heart-felt phrase of tenderest fair,
No liken'd excellence can reach
Her, the most excellent of all,
The best half of creation's best,
Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,
'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
My deepest rapture does her wrong;
My thoughts, that, singing, lark-like soar,
Soaring perceive they've still misprized,
And still forebode her beauty more
Than can perceived be, or surmised.
Yet is it now my chosen task
To sing her worth as Maid and Wife;

And were such post to seek I'd ask
To live her Laureate all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
And by her gentleness made great,
I'd teach how noble man should be
To match with such a lovely mate:
And then in her would move the more
The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased,) till both should soar,
With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink, or rose
Is thrice itself through power of art,
So might my happy skill disclose
New fairness even in her fair heart;
Until that churl should nowhere be
Who bent not, awed, before the throne
Of her affecting majesty,
So meek, so much unlike our own;
Until (for who may hope too much
From her who wields the powers of love!)

Our lifted lives at last should touch
That lofty goal to which they move;
Until we find, as darkness rolls
Far off, and fleshly mists dissolve,
That nuptial contrasts are the poles
On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

2.

Me to these happy notes of praise
Not only Woman's graces stir:
Myself I never seem to raise
So much as when I honour her:
For while my songs so various run,
There lives before my constant mind
An image, time-endear'd, of one
Who is to me all womankind:
Honoria call her: She confers
Bright honour when she breathes my name:
Birth's blazon'd patents, shown with her's,
Are falsified and put to shame;

The fount of honour is her smile;
(I speak but as I feel and think,)
Yet pride consumes me not the while
I thence, with thirst unsated, drink:
For as a Queen, who may not find
Her peer in all the common Earth,
Submits her meek and royal mind,
Espousing one of subject birth,
All barter of like gain above,
She raised me to her noble place,
And made my lordship of her love
The humbling gift of her free grace.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

"BEAUTY'S but flesh and blood, Sir: fye!
"Read here: immortal beauty drink!"
"Just what I thirst for;" I reply,
"But what's this? Rags and Printer's ink!"

2.

He hates not Day whose grateful sight
Adores the Sun's reflected power,
But loves acceptably the Light,
Loving its colours in the flower.

IDYL II.

MARY AND MILDRED.

1.

ONE morning, after Church, I walk'd
Alone with Mary on the Lawn,
And felt myself, howe'er we talk'd,
To high thoughts delicately drawn;
And, when she, gladden'd, found I knew
More of her peace than she'd supposed,
Our confidences heavenwards blew,
Like fox-glove buds, in pairs disclosed.
Our former faults did we confess;
Our ancient feud was more than heal'd;

And, with the woman's eagerness
For amity full sign'd and seal'd,
She, offering up for sacrifice
Her heart's reserve, brought out to show
Some verses, made when she was ice
To all but Heaven, six years ago:
Since happier grown. I took and read
The neat-writ lines. She, void of guile.
Too late repenting, blush'd, and said,
I must not think about the style.

2.

"Day after day, until to-day,
Imaged its fellows gone before,
The same dull task, the weary way,
The weakness pardon'd o'er and o'er,

The thwarted thirst, too faintly felt,
For joy's well-nigh forgotten life,
The impatient heart, which, when I knelt,
Made of my worship barren strife.

Ah, whence to-day's so sweet release;
This clearance light of all my care;
This conscience free, this fertile peace,
These softly folded wings of prayer;

This calm and more than conquering love,
With which the tempter dares not cope;
This joy that lifts no glance above,
For faith too sure, too sweet for hope.

O, happy time, too happy change,
It will not live, though fondly nurst!
Sweet Day, which soon will seem as strange
As now the Night which seems dispersed,

Adieu! But, while my heart is warm'd,
Some heavenly promise let me make:
Strong are those vows and well perform'd
Which, at such times, we undertake."

3.

She from a rose-tree shook the blight:
And well she knew that I knew well
Her grace with silence to requite;
And so we obey'd the luncheon-bell.
We laugh'd at Mildred's laugh, which made
All melancholy wrong: its mood
Such sweet self-confidence display'd,
So full a sense of present good.
Her very faults my fancy fired;
My loving will, so thwarted, grew;
And, bent on worship, I admired
All that she was, with partial view.
And yet, when, as to-day, her smile
Was prettiest, I could not but note
How Honor, less admired, the while
Was lovelier, though from love remote.

4.

We who are married, let us own
A bachelor's chief thought in life
Is, or the fool's not worth a groan,
To win a woman for his wife.
I kept the custom. I confess
I never went to Ball or Fête
Or Show, but in pursuit express
Of my predestinated mate;
And still to me, who still kept sight
Of the sweet chance upon the cards,
Each Beauty blossom'd in the light
Of tender personal regards;
And, in the records of my breast,
Red-letter'd, eminently fair,
Stood sixteen, who, beyond the rest,
Up to that time had been my care:
At Berlin three, one at St. Cloud,
At Chatteris, near Cambridge, one,

At Ely four, in London two,
Two at Bowness, in Paris none,
And, last and best, in Sarum three:
But dearest of the whole fair troop,
In judgment of the moment, she
Whose daisy eyes had learn'd to droop.

III.

HONORIA.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Lover.

1.

WHEN ripen'd time and chasten'd will
Have stretch'd and tuned for love's accords
The five-string'd lyre of life, until
It vibrates with the wind of words;
And "Woman," "Lady," "She," and "Her"
Are names for perfect Good and Fair,
And unknown maidens, talk'd of, stir
His thoughts with reverential care;
He meets, by heavenly chance express,
His destined wife: some hidden hand

Unveils to him that loveliness
Which others cannot understand.
No songs of love, no summer dreams
Did e'er his longing fancy fire
With vision like to this: she seems
In all things better than desire.
His merits in her presence grow,
To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
The authentic airs of Paradise.
For love of her he cannot sleep;
Her beauty haunts him all the night;
It melts his heart, it makes him weep
For wonder, worship, and delight.

2.

To her account does he transfer
His pride, a base and barren root
In him, but, grafted into her,
The bearer of Hesperian fruit.
He dresses, dances well: he knows
A small weight turns a heavy scale:

Who'd have her care for him, and shows
Himself no care, deserves to fail:
The least is well, yet nothing's light
In all the lover does; for he
Who pitches hope at such a height
Will do all things with dignity.
She is so perfect, true and pure,
Her virtue all virtue so endears,
That, often, when he thinks of her,
Life's meanness fills his eyes with tears.
She's far too lovely to be wrong:
Black, if she pleases, shall be white:
Prerogative ties cavil's tongue:
Being a Queen her wrong is right:
Defect super-perfection is:
Her great perfections make him grieve,
Refusing him the bliss of bliss,
Which is to give, and not receive.
Her graces make him rich, and ask
No guerdon: this imperial style

Affronts him: he disdains to bask,
The pensioner of her priceless smile.
He prays for some hard thing to do,
Some work of fame and labour immense
To stretch the languid bulk and thew
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.

3.

O, paradox of love, he longs,
Most humble when he most aspires,
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs
From her he worships and desires:
And yet his passion, if need be,
Would spend all on a single kiss,
And call it great economy,
Counting the honour, not the bliss:
A trifle serves for his relief,
A trifle turns him sick and pale;
And yet his pleasure and his grief
Are both on a majestic scale.

No smallest boon were bought too dear,
Though barter'd for his love-sick life;
Yet trusts he, with undaunted cheer,
To vanquish heaven and call her wife.
He notes how Queens of sweetness still
Neglect their crowns and stoop to mate:
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,
They ask but love proportionate;
How swift pursuit by small degrees,
Love's tactic, works like miracle;
How valour, clothed in courtesies,
Brings down the haughtiest citadel;
And therefore, though he merits not
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,
Out-soars all possible desert:
Resistance only makes him gay:
The fiercer fight the fairer she:
In vain her distance says him nay:
Hope, desperate grown, feigns certainty.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

THE foul in heart and false in mind
Can never taste the sweets of love,
Nor in the world's fair mistress find
What Love finds in her scarf or glove.

2.

Thou shalt not scale Love's height divine
By burrowing at its earthly base,
Nor call the priceless jewel thine,
Who car'st but to affront the case!

3.

The Wrong is made and measured by
The Right's inverted dignity:
Adulterous heart! as love is high
So low in hell thy bed shall be.

IDYL III.

HONORIA.

1.

RESTLESS and sick of long exile
From those sweet friends, I rode to see
The church-repairs; and, after awhile,
Waylaying the Dean, was ask'd to tea.
They introduced the cousin Fred
I'd heard of, Honor's favorite; grave,
Dark, handsome, bluff, but gently bred,
And with an air of the salt wave.
He stared, and gave his hand, and I
Stared too: then donn'd we smiles, the
shrouds

Of ire, best hid while she was by,
A sweet moon 'twixt her lighted clouds.

2.

Whether this Cousin was the cause
I know not, but I seem'd to see,
The first time then, how fair she was,
How much the fairest of the three.
Each stopp'd to let the other go;
But he, being time-bound, rose the first.
Stay'd he in Sarum long? If so
I hoped to see him at the Hurst.
No: he had call'd here, on his way
To Portsmouth, where the Arrogant,
His ship, was; and should leave next day,
For two years' cruise in the Levant.
I watch'd her face, suspecting germs
Of love: her farewell show'd me plain
She loved, on the majestic terms
That she should not be loved again.

And so her cousin, parting, felt,
For all his rough sea face grew red.
Compassion did my malice melt:
Then went I home to a restless bed.
I, who admired her too, could see
His infinite remorse at this
Great mystery, that she should be
So beautiful, yet not be his,
And, pitying, long'd to plead his part;
But scarce could tell, so strange my whim,
Whether the weight upon my heart
Was sorrow for myself or him.

3.

She was all mildness; yet 'twas writ
Upon her beauty legibly,
"He that's for heaven itself unfit,
"Let him not hope to merit me."
And such a challenge, quite apart
From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus

To sweet repentance moved my heart,
And made me more magnanimous,
And led me to review my life,
Inquiring where in aught the least,
If question were of her for wife,
Ill might be mended, hope increased:
Not that I soar'd so far above
Myself, as this great hope to dare:
And yet I half foresaw that love
Might hope where reason would despair

4.

As drowsiness my brain relieved,
A shrill defiance of all to arms,
Shriek'd by the stable-cock, received
An angry answer from three farms.
And, first, I dreamt that I, her knight,
A clarion's haughty pathos heard,
And rode securely to the fight,
Cased in the scarf she had conferr'd;

And there, the bristling lists behind,
Saw many, and vanquish'd all I saw
Of her unnumber'd cousin-kind,
In Navy, Army, Church, and Law;
Then warriors, stern and Norman-nosed,
Seem'd Sarum choristers, whose song,
Mix'd with celestial grief, disclosed
More joy than memory can prolong;
And phantasms as absurd and sweet
Merged each in each, in endless chace,
And everywhere I seem'd to meet
The haunting fairness of her face.

IV.

THE MORNING CALL.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Rose of the World.

1.

LO, when the Lord made North and South
And sun and moon ordained, He,
Forthbringing each by word of mouth
In order of its dignity,
Did man from the crude clay express
By sequence, and, all else decreed,
He form'd the woman; nor might less
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.

2.

And still with favour singled out,
Marr'd less than man by mortal Fall,
Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical;
No faithless thought her instinct shrouds,
But fancy chequers settled sense,
Like alteration of the clouds
On noonday's azure permanence;
Pure courtesy, composure, ease,
Declare affections nobly fix'd,
And impulse sprung from due degrees
Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd;
Her modesty, her chiefest grace,
The cestus clasping Venus' side,
Is potent to deject the face
Of him who would affront its pride;
Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
Nor spotted thought its taint disclose

Under the protest of a cheek
  Outbragging Nature's boast the rose.
In mind and manners how discreet!
  How artless in her very art;
How candid in discourse; how sweet
  The concord of her lips and heart;
How, (not to call true instinct's bent
  And woman's very nature, harm,)
How amiable and innocent
  Her pleasure in her power to charm;
How humbly careful to attract,
  Though crown'd with all the soul desires
Connubial aptitude exact,
  Diversity that never tires.

II.

The Tribute.

NO splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear;
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair;
For her the seas their pearls reveal;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre, and lapis lazuli;
The worm its golden woof presents;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves;
And all, by this their power to give
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

HOW easy it is to keep sin-free,
How hard that freedom to recall!
For 'tis the heavenly doom that we
Forget the heavens from which we fall.

2.

What holy lives we all should live,
Might we remember joy and pain.
Alas, that memory, like a sieve,
Should hold the chaff, and drop the grain!

IDYL IV.

THE MORNING CALL.

1.

BY meekness charm'd, or proud to allow
"A queenly claim to live admired,
"Full many a lady has ere now
"My apprehensive fancy fired,
"And woven many a transient chain;
"But never lady like to this,
"Who holds me as yonder weather-vane
"Is held by yonder clematis.
"She seems the life of nature's powers:
"Her beauty is the genial thought

"Which makes the sunshine bright; the flowers,
"But for their hint of her, were nought."

2.

A voice, the sweeter for the grace
Of suddenness, while thus I dream'd,
"Good-morning!" said or sang. Her face
The mirror of the morning seem'd.
Her sisters in the garden walk'd,
And would I come? Across the Hall
She took me; and we laugh'd and talk'd
About the Flower-show, and the Ball.
Their pinks had won a spade for prize:
But that was gallantly withdrawn
For "Jones on Wiltshire Butterflies:"
How rude! And so we paced the lawn,
Close-cut, and, with geranium-plots,
A rival glow of green and red;
Then counted sixty apricots
On one small tree. The sweet hour sped;
And I rode slow 'tward home, my breast
A load of joy and tender care:

And this delight, which life oppress'd,
To fix'd aims grew, that ask'd for pray'r:
And I reach'd home, where, whip in hand
And soil'd bank-notes all ready, stood
The Farmer who farm'd all my land,
Except the little Park and Wood.
And, with the accustom'd compliment
Of talk, and beef, and frothing beer,
I, my own steward, took my rent,
Three hundred pounds for half the year:
Our witnesses the Maid and Groom,
We sign'd the lease for seven years more,
And bade Good-day. Then to my room
I went, and closed and lock'd the door,
And cast myself down on my bed,
And there, with many a blissful tear,
I vow'd to love and pray'd to wed
The Maiden who had grown so dear;
Thank'd God who had set her in my path;
And promised, as I hoped to win,

I never would sully my faith
By the least selfishness or sin;
Whatever in her sight I'd seem
I'd really be; I'd never blend
With my delight in her a dream
'Twould change her cheek to comprehend;
And, if she wish'd it, I'd prefer
Another's to my own success;
And always seek the best for her,
With unofficious tenderness.

3.

Rising, I breathed a brighter clime,
And found myself all self above,
And, with a charity sublime,
Contemn'd not those who did not love;
And I could not but feel that then
I shone with something of her grace,
And went forth to my fellow men
My commendation in my face.

V.

THE VIOLETS.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Parallel.

1.

I KNOW not how to her it may seem,
Or how to a perfect judging eye,
But, in my true and calm esteem,
Man misdeserves his sweet ally:
Where she succeeds with cloudless brow,
In common and in holy course,
He fails, in spite of prayer and vow,
And agonies of faith and force:
Or, if his suit with Heaven prevails
To righteous life, his virtuous deeds

Lack beauty, virtue's badge: she fails
More graciously than he succeeds.
Her spirit, compact of gentleness,
If Heaven postpones or grants her pray'r,
Conceives no pride in its success,
And in its failure no despair;
But his, enamour'd of its hurt,
Baffled, blasphemes, or, not denied,
Crows from the dunghill of desert,
And wags its ugly wings for pride.
He's never young nor ripe; she grows
More infantine, auroral, mild;
And still the more she lives and knows
The lovelier she's express'd a child.
Say that she wants the will of man
To conquer fame, not check'd by cross,
Nor moved when others bless or ban;
She wants but what to have were loss;
Or say she holds no seals of power,
But humbly lives her life at school;

Alas, we have yet to hail the hour
When God shall clothe the best with rule.
Or say she wants the patient brain
To track shy truth; her facile wit
At that which he hunts down with pain
Flies straight, and does exactly hit:
Nay, though she were half what she is,
He twice himself, mere love alone,
Her special crown, as truth is his,
Gives title to the loftier throne:
For love is substance, truth the form:
Truth without love were less than nought;
But blindest love is sweet and warm,
And full of truth not shaped by thought:
And therefore in herself she stands
Adorn'd with undeficient grace,
Her happy virtues taking hands,
Each smiling in another's face:
So dancing round the Tree of Life,
They make an Eden in her breast,

Whilst his, disjointed and at strife,
Proud-thoughted, do not bring him rest,
But ever groan and gasp for dearth
Of that in her with which they agree,
Like rude base notes, of little worth
Till married to their melody.

2.

Her privilege, not impotence,
Exempts her from the work of man:
Humbling his proper excellence,
Jeanne d'Arc led war's obstreperous van:
No post of policy or pride
Does Heaven from her holding grudge:
Miriam and Anna prophesied,
In Israel Deborah was judge;
Countless the Christian heroines
Who've blest the world, and still do bless;
The praise their equal courage wins
Counts tenfold through their tenderness;

And, ah, sad times gone by, denied
The joyfullest omen ever seen,
The full-grown Lion's power and pride
Led by the soft hands of a Queen.

3.

Yet, lest my tender-thoughted strain
Should seem to impugn the right decree
Of Him who made the human twain
Conjoin'd in this disparity,
My Song declares the heavenly art
Which crowns her wealth with his defect,
And, in love's high exacting mart,
Pays poor desert with rich respect;
And makes this much unequal pair
Well-match'd in all that love requires,
If she's incomparably fair,
And he incomparably admires.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

LOVE in the Loved his likeness loves,
But loves the lovely difference more,
And like in diverse doubly moves
His love 'tward each, twice loved before.

2.

Of all the love-producing host
Of virtues which in her agree,
'Tis vanity becomes her most,
Perfecting her by flattering me.

3.

Fatal in force yet gentle in will,
Her power makes, not defeats, but pacts;
For, like the kindly loadstone, still
She's drawn herself by what she attracts.

IDYL V.

THE VIOLETS.

1.

I WENT not to the Dean's unbid,
For I'd not have my mystery,
From her so delicately hid,
Discuss'd by gossips at their tea.
A long, long week, and not once there,
Had made my spirit sick and faint,
And lack-love, foul as love is fair,
Perverted all things to complaint.
How vain the world had grown to be!
How mean all people and their ways,

How ignorant their sympathy,
And how impertinent their praise;
What they for virtuousness esteem'd,
How far removed from heavenly right;
What pettiness their trouble seem'd,
How undelightful their delight;
To my necessity how strange
The sunshine and the song of birds,
How dull the clouds' continual change,
How foolishly content the herds;
How unaccountable the law
Which bade me sit in blindness here,
While she, the sun by which I saw,
Shed splendour in an idle sphere!
And then I kiss'd her stolen glove,
And sigh'd to reckon and define
The modes of martyrdom in love,
And how far each one might be mine:
I thought how love, whose vast estate
Is earth and air and sun and sea,

Encounters oft the beggar's fate,
Despised on score of poverty;
How parents' pride the living's cause
To Death's arbitrement refers,
Asks who some other's husband was,
And so decides who shall be her's;
How Nature, as unnatural
And contradicting Nature's source,
Which is but love, seems most of all
Well-pleased to harry true love's course;
How, many times, it comes to pass
That trifling shades of temperament,
Affecting only one, alas,
Not love, but love's success prevent;
How manners often falsely paint
The man; how passionate respect,
Hid by itself, may bear the taint
Of coldness and a dull neglect;
And how a little outward dust
Can a clear merit quite o'ercloud,

And make her fatally unjust,
  And him desire a darker shroud;
How senseless Opportunity
  Gives baser men the better chance;
How all things, each in its degree,
  Impose upon her ignorance;
How Heaven, inscrutable in this,
  Lets the gross general make or mar
The destiny of love, which is
  So tender and particular;
Say rather how itself conspires
  With Man and Nature against love,
As pleased to couple cross desires,
  And cross where they themselves approve.
Wretched were life, if the end were now!
  But this gives tears to dry despair,
Faith shall be blest, we know not how,
  And love fulfill'd, we know not where.
While thus I grieved, and kiss'd her glove,
  My man brought in her note to say,

Papa had bid her send his love,
And hoped I'd dine with them next day:
They had learn'd and practised Purcell's glee,
To sing it by to-morrow night.
The Postscript was: Her sisters and she
Inclosed some violets, blue and white:
She and her sisters found them where
I wager'd once no violets grew;
So they had won the gloves. And there
The violets lay, two white, one blue.

VI.

THE DEAN.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Frost in Harvest.

THE lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his Love,
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.
The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft, (let truth be told,)
The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold,
And all love's May-day promising,
Like song of birds before they pair,

Or flush of flowers in boastful Spring,
Dies out, and leaves the Summer bare.
Yet should a man, it seems to me,
Honour what honourable is,
For some more honourable plea
Than only that it is not his.
The gentle wife, who decks his board
And makes his day to have no night,
Whose wishes wait upon her Lord,
Who finds her own in his delight,
Is she another now than she
Who, mistress of her maiden charms,
At his wild prayer, incredibly
Committed them to his proud arms?
Unless her choice of him's a slur
Which makes her proper credit dim,
He never enough can honour her
Who past all speech has honour'd him.

II.

Love Justified.

WHAT if my pole-star of respect
Be dim to others, shall their "Nay,"
Presumably their own defect,
Invalidate my heart's strong "Yea?"
And can they rightly me condemn,
If I, with partial love, prefer?
I am not more unjust to them,
But only not unjust to her.
Leave us alone! After awhile,
This pool of private charity
Shall change its shores into an isle.
And roll a world-embracing sea
This little germ of nuptial love,
Which springs so simply from the sod,
The root is, as my Song shall prove,
Of all our love to man and God.

III.

Perfect Love rare.

MOST rare is still most noble found,
Most noble still most incomplete:
Sad law, which leaves King Love uncrown'd
In this obscure, terrestrial seat!
With bale more sweet than others' bliss,
And bliss more wise than others' bale,
The secrets of the world are his,
And freedom without let or pale.
O, zealous good, O, virtuous glee,
Religious, and without alloy,
O, privilege high, which none but he
Who chastely merits can enjoy;
O, Love, who art that fabled sun
Which all the world with bounty loads,
Without respect of realms, save one,
And gilds with double lustre Rhodes,

Thy heavenly splendour magnifies
The least admixture of earth's mould,
Cheapens thyself in thine own eyes,
And makes the foolish mocker bold.

IV.

The Sentences.

1.

HE safely walks in darkest ways,
Whose youth is lighted from above,
Where, through the senses' silvery haze,
Dawns the veil'd moon of nuptial love.

2.

Who is the Happy Husband? He
Who, scanning his unwedded life,
Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,
'Twas faithful to his future Wife.

IDYL VI.

THE DEAN.

1.

THE Ladies rose. I held the door,
And sigh'd, as her departing grace
Assured me that she always wore
A heart as happy as her face;
And, jealous of the winds that blew,
I dreaded, o'er the tasteless wine,
What fortune momently might do
To hurt the hope that she'd be mine.

2.

Towards my mark the Dean's talk set:
He praised my "Notes on Abury."
Read when the Association met
At Sarum; he was glad to see
I had not stopp'd, as some men had,
At Wrangler and Prize Poet; last,
He hoped the business was not bad
I came about: then the wine pass'd.

3.

A full glass prefaced my reply:
I loved his daughter, Honor: he knew
My estate and prospects: might I try
To win her? In his eyes tears grew.
He thought 'twas that. I might: he gave
His true consent, if I could get
Her love. A dear good Girl! she'd have
Only three thousand pounds as yet:

More bye and bye. Yes, his goodwill
Should go with me: he would not stir:
He and my father in old time still
Wish'd I should one day marry her;
But God so seldom lets us take
The road we think our best, when it lies
In steps that either mar or make
Or alter others' destinies,
That, though his blessing and his prayer
Had help'd, should help, my suit, yet he
Left all to me, his passive share
Consent and opportunity.
My chance, he hoped, was good: I'd won
Some name already; friends and place
Appear'd within my reach; but none
Her mind and manners would not grace.
Girls love to see the men in whom
They invest their vanities admired:
Besides, where goodness is, there room
For good to work will be desired.

'Twas so with one now past away:
And what she was at twenty-two,
Honor was now: and he might say
Mine was a choice I could not rue.

4.

He ceased, and gave his hand. He had won
(And joyful tears avouch'd my word)
From me the affection of a son,
Whichever fortune Heaven conferr'd.
Well, well, would I take more wine? Then go
To her: she makes tea on the Lawn
These fine warm afternoons. And so
We went whither my soul was drawn;
And her light-hearted ignorance
Of interest in our discourse
Fill'd me with love, and seem'd to enhance
Her beauty with pathetic force,
As, through the flowery mazes sweet,
Fronting the wind that flutter'd blythe,

And loved her shape, and made her feet
Bare to their insteps proud and lithe,
She approach'd, all mildness and young trust;
And ever her chaste and noble air
Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,
A vague, faint augury of despair.

VII.

ÆTNA AND THE MOON.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Queen.

1.

TO heroism and holiness
How hard it is for man to soar,
But how much harder to be less
Than what his mistress loves him for!
He does with ease what do he must,
Or lose her, and there's nought debarr'd
From him who's call'd to meet her trust,
And credit her desired regard.
Ah, wasteful woman, she that may
On her sweet self set her own price,

Knowing he cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapen'd paradise;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men and men divine.

2.

O Queen, awake to thy renown,
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,
And comprehend and wear the crown
Of thy despised prerogative!
I who in manhood's name at length
With glad songs come to abdicate
The gross regality of strength,
Must yet in this thy praise abate,
That through thine erring humbleness
And disregard of thy degree,
Mainly, has man been so much less
Than fits his fellowship with thee.

High thoughts had shaped the foolish brow,
The coward had grasp'd the hero's sword
The vilest had been great, hadst thou,
Just to thyself, been worth's reward:
But lofty honours undersold
Seller and buyer both disgrace;
And favour that makes folly bold
Puts out the light in virtue's face.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

THAIS, my heart's no match for thine:
Waste not thy warmth on me; but go
Seek out some chillier spirit: mine
Asks not another fire, but snow.

2.

The lack of lovely pride in her
Who strives to please, my pleasure numbs;
And still the maid I most prefer
Whose care to please with pleasing comes.

IDYL VII.

ÆTNA AND THE MOON.

I.

TO ease my heart, I, feigning, seized
A pen, and, showering tears, declared
My unfeign'd passion; sadly pleased
Only to dream that so I dared.
Thus was the fervid truth confess'd,
And love, the paradox, penn'd the plea,
As wilfully in hope depress'd,
Yet bold beyond hope's warranty:

2.

"O, more than dear, be more than just,
"And do not deafly shut the door!
"I claim no right to speak; I trust
"Mercy, not right: yet who has more?
"For, if more love makes not more fit,
"Of claimants here none's more nor less;
"Since your great worth does not permit
"Degrees in our unworthiness.
"Yet, if there's aught that can be done
"With arduous labour of long years,
"By which you'll say that you'll be won,
"O tell me, and I'll dry my tears.
"Ah, no; if loving cannot move,
"How foolishly must labour fail!
"The use of deeds is to show love:
"If signs suffice let these avail:
"Your name pronounced brings to my heart
"A feeling like the violet's breath,

"Which does so much of heaven impart
"As makes me yearn with tears for death;
"The winds that in the garden toss
"The Guelder-roses give me pain,
"Alarm me with the dread of loss,
"Exhaust me with the dream of gain;
"I'm troubled by the clouds that move;
"The breath shakes me when I respire;
"And ever, like a torch, my love,
"Thus agitated, flames the higher;
"All's hard that has not you for goal;
"I scarce can move my pen to write,
"For love engages all my soul,
"And leaves my body void of might;
"The wings of will spread idly as do
"The bird's that in a vacuum lies;
"My breast, asleep with dreams of you,
"Forgets to breathe, and bursts in sighs;
"I see no rest this side the grave,
"No rest or hope, from you apart;

"Your life is in the rose you gave,
"Its perfume suffocates my heart;
"There's no refreshment in the breeze;
"The heaven o'erwhelms me with its blue;
"I faint beside the dancing seas;
"Winds, skies, and waves are only you;
"Where'er I go, wandering forlorn,
"You are the world's love, life, and glee:
"O, wretchedness not to be borne
"If she that's Love should not love me!"

3.

I could not write another word,
Through pity for my own distress;
And forth I went, untimely stirr'd
To make my misery more or less.
I went beneath the heated noon,
Until I came where, simple and free,
She sat at work; and, as the Moon
On Ætna smiles, she smiled on me;

And then grew pale and grave. No more.
The Dean, by ill or happy hap,
Came home; and Wolf burst in before,
And put his nose upon her lap.

VIII.

SARUM PLAIN.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Present Good contemned.

HOW long shall men deny the flower,
Because its roots are in the earth;
And crave with tears from God the dower
They have, and have despised as dearth;
And scorn as low their human lot,
With frantic pride, too blind to see
That standing on the head makes not
Either for ease or dignity?
But fools shall feel like fools to find,
(Too late inform'd,) that Angels' mirth
Is one in cause and mode and kind
With that which they contemn'd on earth

II.

The Revelation.

AN idle Poet, here and there,
Looks round him, but, for all the rest,
The world, unfathomably fair,
Is duller than a witling's jest.
Love wakes men, once a life-time each;
They lift their heavy lids, and look;
And, lo, what one sweet page can teach
They read with joy, then shut the book:
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
And most forget; but, either way,
That and the Child's unheeded dream
Is all the light of all their day.

III.

Love in Idleness.

EXCEPT love's toil has love for prize,
(And then he's Hercules,) above
All other contrarieties
Is labour contrary to love.
No fault of love's, but Nature's Laws:
And love in idleness lies quick;
For, as the worm whose powers make pause
And swoon, through alteration sick,
The soul, its wingless state dissolved,
Awaits its nuptial life complete,
All indolently self-convolved,
Cocoon'd in silken fancies sweet.

IV.

The Tempest.

THE storm-cloud, whose portentous shade
Fumes from a core of smother'd fire,
His livery is, whose worship'd maid
Denies herself to his desire.
Ah, grief that almost crushes life,
To lie upon his lonely bed
And fancy her another's wife!
His brain is flame, his heart is lead;
Hope is despised, and death esteem'd:
And yet this tempest shall not blast:
Incredible as late it seem'd,
The unscarr'd heavens grow clear at last.

V.

Love in Tears.

IF fate Love's dear ambition mar,
And load his breast with hopeless pain,
And seem to blot out sun and star,
Love, lost or won, is countless gain:
His sorrow boasts a secret bliss
Which sorrow of itself beguiles,
And Love in tears too noble is
For pity, save of Love in smiles.
But looking backward through his tears,
With vision of maturer scope,
How often one dead joy appears
The platform of some better hope!
And, let us own, the sharpest smart
Which human patience may endure
Pays light for that which leaves the heart
More generous, dignified, and pure.

VI.

The Sentences.

1.

I'LL speak the truth, (it will not blast!)
In tenderest love-strains most we hear
The dubious chords, which, while they last,
Deject love's very life with fear.

2.

To me, who make of love my boast,
Be this sad word by love forgiven,
Strange times there are when love's almost
As joyless as the hope of heaven.

IDYL VIII.

SARUM PLAIN.

1.

BREAKFAST enjoy'd, with hush of boughs
And perfumes thro' the windows blown;
Brief worship done, which still endows
The day with beauty not its own;
With intervening rest, that paints
Each act with honour, and makes lives calm
As old processions of the Saints,
At every step a wand of palm;

Then light shawls donn'd with help, we drove
To Wilton; there discuss'd again,
Till all at last agreed to approve
The Lombard church; then, 'tward the Plain,
We past my house (remark'd with praise
By the others, and she acquiesced);
And, leaving the old and lazy greys
Below the hill, we walk'd the rest.

2.

The moods of love are like the wind;
And none knows whence or why they rise
I ne'er before felt heart and mind
So much affected through mine eyes.
How cognate with the flatter'd air,
How native to the earth her throne,
She moved; how feeling and how fair
For other's pleasure and her own:
And, ah, the heaven of her face:
How, when she laugh'd, I seem'd to see

The gladness of the primal grace,
And how, when grave, its dignity!
Of all she was, the least not less
Delighted the devoted eye.
No fold or fashion of her dress
Her dearness did not sanctify:
Better it seem'd as now to walk,
And humbly by her gentle side
To observe her smile and hear her talk,
Than call the world's next best my bride.
I could not else than grieve. What cause?
Was I not blest, was she not there,
Likely my own? Ah, that it was:
How like seem'd 'likely' to despair!

3.

And yet to see her so benign,
So amiable and womanly,
In every christian kindness mine,
And full of maiden courtesy,

Was pleasure so without alloy,
  Such unreproved, sufficient bliss,
I almost wish'd, the while, that joy
  Might never further go than this.
I feign'd her won: the mind finite,
  Puzzled and fagg'd by stress and strain
To comprehend the whole delight,
  Made bliss more hard to bear than pain:
All good, save power to taste, so summ'd
  And grasp'd, it smote me like a knife
That sin had narrow'd, dull'd and numb'd
  The senses to the feast of life;
That passing good breathes sweetest breath;
  And love itself at highest reveals
More black than bright, commending death,
  By teaching how much life conceals.

4.

But happier passions these subdued,
  When from the close and sultry lane,

With eyes made bright by what they view'd,
We emerged upon the mounded Plain.
As to the breeze a flag unfurls
My spirit expanded, sweetly embraced
By those same gusts which shook her curls
And vex'd the ribbon at her waist.
To the future cast I future cares;
Breathed with a heart unfreighted, free,
And laugh'd at the presumptuous airs
That with her muslins folded me;
Till, one vague rack along my sky,
The thought that she might ne'er be mine,
Lay half forgotten by the eye
So feasted with the Sun's warm shine.

5.

By the great stones we chose our ground
For shade; and there, in converse sweet,
Took luncheon. On a little mound
Sat the three ladies: at their feet,

I sat; and smelt the heathy smell,
  Pluck'd hare-bells, turn'd the telescope
To the country round. My life went well,
  That hour, without the wheels of hope:
And I despised the Druid rocks
  That scowl'd their chill gloom from above,
Like churls whose stolid wisdom mocks
  The lightness of immortal love.

IX.

THE RAILWAY.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Miscreant.

O MAN, (and Legion is thy name,)
Who hadst for dowry with thy wife
A conduct void of outward blame,
The beauty of a loyal life,
Is nature in thee too spiritless,
Ignoble, impotent, and dead,
To prize her love and loveliness
The more for being thy daily bread?
And art thou one of that vile crew
Which see no splendour in the sun,

Praising alone the good that's new,
Or over, or not yet begun?
And has it dawn'd on thy dull wits
That love warms many as soft a nest,
And, though swathed round with benefits,
Thou art not singularly blest;
And fail thy thanks for gifts divine,
The common food of many a heart,
Because they are not only thine?
Beware lest in the end thou art
Cast like a goat forth from the fold,
Too proud to feel the common grace
Of blissful myriads who behold
For evermore the Father's face.

II.

The Wife's Tragedy.

MAN must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure: down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself:
How often flings for nought! and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes:
And if he at last, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,

She leans and weeps against his breast,
  And seems to think the sin was hers:
And while his love has any life,
  Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
  Dearly devoted to his arms.
She loves with love that cannot tire;
  And if, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love flames higher,
  As grass grows taller round a stone.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

FEMALE and male God made the Man
His Image is the whole, not half;
And, in our love, we dimly scan
The love which is between Himself.

2.

Lo, there, whence love, life, light are pour'd,
Veil'd with impenetrable rays,
Amidst the presence of the Lord
Coequal Wisdom laughs and plays,*

* Prov. viii. 22-30.

3.

Few hear my song: it soars above
The subtlest senses of the swarm
Of wretched things which know not love,
Their Psyche still a wingless worm.

IDYL IX.

THE RAILWAY.

1.

I STOOD by Honor and the Dean,
They seated in the London Train:
A month from her! yet this had been,
Ere now, without such bitter pain.
But neighbourhood makes parting light,
And distance remedy has none:
She near, I, grateful, felt as might
A blind man sitting in the sun:
She near, all for the time was well;
Hope's self, when we were far apart,

With lonely feeling, like the smell
Of heath on mountains, fill'd my heart:
To see her was delight's full scope;
And her kind smile, so clear of care,
That day, though darkening all my hope,
Gilded the cloud of my despair.

2.

She had forgot to bring a book:
I lent one; blamed the print for old;
And did not tell her that she took
A Tasso worth its weight in gold.
I hoped she'd lose it; for my love
Was grown so dainty, high, and nice,
It prized no luxury above
The sense of fruitless sacrifice.

3.

The Train stirr'd; with it, all my worth:
My spirits fled in fear to mine eyes,

As in Peru, if moves the Earth,
The people hurry out with cries.
I bade her adieu, shook hands with the Dean,
Ask'd him arriv'd to write; forth roll'd;
A bitter tear or two unseen,
She reading Tasso; then the bell toll'd;
And, with a shock and shriek like death,
Link catching link, the long array,
With ponderous pulse and fiery breath,
Proud of its burthen, swept away;
And through the lingering crowd I broke;
Sought the church-tower, and thence, heart-sick,
Beheld, far off, the little smoke
Along the landscape kindling quick.

4.

What should I do, where should I go,
Now she was gone, my Love! for mine
She was, whatever here below
Cross'd or usurp'd my right divine.

Life without her was vain and gross;
The glory from the world was gone;
And on the gardens of the Close
As on Saharah shone the sun.
Oppress'd with her departed grace,
My thoughts on ill surmises fed:
The harmful influence of the place
She went to, fill'd my soul with dread.
She, mixing with the people there,
Might come back alter'd, having caught
The foolish, fashionable air
Of knowing all, and feeling naught.
Or, giddy with her beauty's praise,
She'd scorn our simple country life,
Its wholesome nights and tranquil days,
No longer fit to be my wife.
"To be my wife," oh, tenderest word!
How oft, as fearful she might hear,
Whispering that name of "wife," I heard
Therein the love-song of the sphere.

5.

I found the Book she had used, and stay'd
For Evening Prayers; in grief's despite
Felt grief assuaged; then homeward stray'd,
Weary beforehand of the night.
The blackbird, in the shadowy wood,
Talk'd to himself; and eastward grew
In heaven the symbol of my mood,
Where one bright star engross'd the blue.

X.

GOING TO CHURCH.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Gracious Chivalry.

MAY these my songs inaugurate
The day of a new chivalry
Which shall not feel the mortal fate
Of fashion, chance, or phantasy.
The ditties of the knightly time,
The deep-conceiving dreams of youth,
With sweet corroboration chime,
And I believe that love's the truth.
I do and ever shall profess
That I more tenderly revere
A woman in her gentleness
Than all things else I love or fear;

And these glad songs are good to prove
To loyal hearts convincingly,
That he who's orthodox in love
Can hold no kind of heresy.
Long lease of his low mind befall
The man who, in his wilful gust,
Makes waste for one, to others all
Discourteous, frigid, and unjust!
Untrue to love and ladies he
Who, scarf on arm and spear in rest,
Assail'd the world with proof that she,
Being his, was also nature's best.
That chivalry do I proclaim
Alone substantial, wise, and good,
Which scorns to help one woman's fame
With treason against all womanhood.
Each maid, (albeit to me my own
Appears and is past others rare,)
When aptness makes her beauty known,
May seem as singularly fair;

And each is justly most desired;
And no true Knight will care to prove
That there is more of what's admired
In his than in another's love.

II.

Love Liberal.

"WHENEVER I come where women are,
"How sad soe'er I was before,
"Though like a ship frost-bound and far
"Withheld in ice from the ocean's roar,
"Third-winter'd in that dreadful dock,
"With stiffen'd cordage, sails decay'd,
"And crew that care for calm and shock
"Alike, too dull to be dismay'd;
"Though spirited like that speedless bark,
"My cold affections like the crew,
"My present drear, my future dark,
"The past too happy to be true;
"Yet if I come where women are,
"How sad soever I was before,

" Then is my sadness banish'd far,
" And I am like that ship no more ;
" Or like that ship if the ice-field splits,
" Burst by the sudden polar Spring,
" And all thank God with their warmed wits,
" And kiss each other and dance and sing,
" And hoist fresh sails that make the breeze
" Blow them along the liquid sea,
" From the homeless North where life did freeze,
" Into the haven where they would be."
So thought the melancholy boy,
Whose love-sick mind, misreading fate,
Scarce hoped that any Queen of Joy
Could ever stoop to be his mate.
Thus thinks the man, who deems, (tho' life
Has long been crown'd with youth's desire,)
That he who has his Love to wife
Has all that heart may well require :—
Though bonded unto one, my best,
My faith to whom is pleasure and ease,

Shall I despise or shun the rest
  Of nature's queens and priestesses ?
Rather by loving one I learn
  To love her like, who still recall
My nuptial pale, and teach in turn
  That faith to one is debt to all:
For I'm not of so dull a wit
  As not to know that what I admire
And the sweet joy of loving it
  Would both be slain by false desire;
Therefore, though singly her's till death,
  (And after, I hope,) with all I'm free,
Inhaling love's delighted breath
  In the bright air of chastity.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

WE fast, give alms, pray, weep, and wake,
And wear our hearts out, o'er the Word:
Ah, less of this, and let us make
More melody unto the Lord!

2.

Happy, if on the tempest's gloom
Thou seest the covenant of God;
But far, far happier he on whom
The kiss works better than the rod.

3.

O, too absurd for pity or blame,
Prostrate, our backs against the Sun,
We mourn the shadow of our shame,
When getting up would make it none.

IDYL X.

GOING TO CHURCH.

1.

I WOKE at three; for I was bid
To breakfast with the Dean at nine,
And take his girls to Church. I slid
My curtain, found the season fine,
And could not rest, so rose. The air
Was dark and sharp; the roosted birds
Cheep'd, "Here am I, Sweet; are you there?'
On Avon's misty flats the herds
Expected, comfortless, the day,
Which slowly fired the clouds above;

The cock scream'd, somewhere far away;
In sleep the matrimonial dove
Was brooding: no wind waked the wood,
Nor moved the midnight marish damps,
Nor thrill'd the poplar; quiet stood
The chestnut with its thousand lamps;
The moon shone yet, but weak and drear,
And seem'd to watch, with bated breath,
The landscape, all made sharp and clear
By stillness, as a face by death.

2.

My prayers for her being done, I took
Occasion by the quiet hour
To find and know, by Rule and Book,
The rights of love's beloved power.

3.

Fronting the question without ruth,
Not ignorant that evermore,

If men will stoop to kiss the Truth,
She lifts them higher than before,
I from above such light required
As now should once for all destroy
The folly which at times desired
A sanction for so great a joy.

4.

Thenceforth, and through that prayer, I trod
A path with no suspicions dim;
I loved her in the name of God,
And for the ray she was of Him;
I ought to admire much more, not less:
Her beauty was a godly grace:
The mystery of loveliness,
Which made an altar of her face,
Was not of the flesh, though that was fair,
But a most pure and lambent light,
Without a name, by which the rare
And virtuous spirit flamed to sight.

If oft, in love, effect lack'd cause,
And cause effect, 'twere vain to soar
Reasons to seek for that which was
Reason itself, or something more.
My joy was no idolatry
Upon the ends of the vile earth bent,
For when I loved her most then I
Most yearn'd for more divine content,
And felt her charms, less what they were,
Than what foretold, not slow to infer
How loving and how lovely fair
Must He be who had fashion'd her.
That other doubt, which, like a ghost
At all love's banquets haunted me,
Was thus resolv'd: Him loved I most,
But her I loved most sensibly:
Lastly, I knew my hope unblamed
By any soil of sensual smirch;
And forth I went, no whit ashamed
To take my passion into Church;

Grateful and glad to think that all
Such cogitations would seem vain
To her, whose nature's lighter fall
Made no divorce 'twixt heart and brain.

5.

I found them, with exactest grace
And fresh as Spring for Spring attired;
And, by the radiance in her face,
I saw she felt she was admired;
And, through the common luck of love,
A moment's fortunate delay,
To fit the little lilac glove,
Gave me her arm; and I and they
(They true to this and every hour,
As if attended on by Time),
Went into Church while yet the tower
Was warbling with the finish'd chime.

6.

Her soft song, singularly heard
Beside me, in the Psalms, withstood.

The roar of voices, like a bird
  Sole singing in a windy wood;
And, when we knelt, she seem'd to be
  An angel teaching me to pray;
And all through the sweet Liturgy
  My spirit rejoiced without allay,
Being for once borne clearly above
  All banks and bars of ignorance,
By this bright spring-tide of pure love,
  And floated in a free expanse,
Whence it could see from side to side,
  The obscurity from every part
Winnow'd away and purified
  By the vibrations of my heart.

7.

The Dean's Text, (oft it happens thus,)
  Most apt to what my thoughts employ'd,
Was Paul's word to those, infamous,
  Of natural affection void.

He preach'd but what the conscience saith
To those blest few that listen well:
"No fruit can come of that man's faith
Who is to Nature infidel.
God stands not with Himself at strife:
His Work is first, His Word is next:
Two sacred tomes, one Book of Life;
The comment this, and that the text.
Ill worship they who drop the Creed,
And take their chance with Jew and Turk;
But not so ill as they who read
The Word, and doubt the greater Work."

XI.

THE BALL.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Daughter of Eve.

1.

THOUGH woman be the Child of Eve,
Death-wounded to the dear heart's core;
Shall man for her sad lineage grieve,
Man, suffering less and sinning more?
No: he whose praises do not pile
The measure of her just desert,
Impugns the logic of her smile,
Which gives the balm and takes the hurt.
For my part, when, rejoiced, I trace
Her various worth, and how she is

My most effectual means of grace,
And casket of my worldly bliss,
I, looking round, do nowhere see
That second good which doth afford
The like compulsion, urging me
With a pure mind to praise the Lord.

2.

Her meek and gentle mood o'erstept
Withers my love, that lightly scans
The rest, and does in her accept
All her own faults, but none of man's.
I have no heart to judge her ill,
Or honour her fair station less,
Who, with a woman's errors, still
Preserves a woman's gentleness;
For thus I think, if any I see
Who falls short of my high desire,
"How admirable would she be,
Could she but know how I admire!"

Or fails she, though from blemish clear,
To charm to the full, 'tis my defect;
And so my thought, with reverent fear
To err by doltish disrespect,
Imputes love's great regard, and says,
"Though unapparent 'tis to me,
Be sure this Queen some other sways
"With well perceiv'd supremacy."

3.

Behold the worst! Light from above
On the blank ruin writes "Forbear:
"Her first crime was unguarded love,
"And all the rest was mere despair."

4.

Discrown'd, dejected, but not lost,
O, sad one, with no more a name
Or place in all the honour'd host
Of maiden and of matron fame,

Grieve on; but, if thou grievest right,
'Tis not that these abhor thy state,
Nor would'st thou lower an inch the height
Which makes thy casting down so great.
Good is thy lot in its degree;
For hearts that verily repent,
Are burden'd with impunity,
And comforted by chastisement.
Sweet patience sanctify thy woes!
And doubt not but our God is just,
Albeit unscath'd thy traitor goes,
And thou art stricken to the dust.
That penalty's the best to bear
Which follows soonest on the sin;
And guilt's a game where losers fare
Better than those who seem to win.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

FRACTIONS indefinitely small
Of interests infinitely great,
Count in Love's learned wit for all,
And have the dignity of fate.

2.

Not to unveil before the gaze
Of an imperfect sympathy,
In aught we are, is the sweet praise
And the main sum of modesty.

3.

Love blabb'd of is a great decline;
A careless word unsanctions sense;
But he who casts Heaven's truth to swine
Consummates all incontinence.

IDYL XI.

THE BALL.

1.

MY memory of heaven awakes:
"She's not of the earth, although her light,
"As lantern'd by her body, makes
"A piece of it past bearing bright.
"So innocently proud and fair
"She is, that Wisdom sings for glee
"And Folly dies, breathing one air
"With such a bright-cheek'd chastity;
"And though her charms are a strong law
"Compelling all men to admire,

" They are so clad with lovely awe
" None but the noble dares desire.
" He who would seek to make her his
" Will comprehend that souls of grace
" Own sweet repulsion, and that 'tis
" The quality of their embrace
" To be like the majestic reach
" Of coupled suns, that, from afar,
" Mingle their mutual spheres, while each
" Circles the twin obsequious star:
"And in the warmth of hand to hand,
" Of heart to heart, he'll vow to note
"And reverently understand
" How the two spirits shine remote;
"And ne'er to numb fine honour's nerve,
" Nor let sweet awe in passion melt,
" Nor fail by courtesies to observe
" The space which makes attraction felt;
" Nor cease to guard like life the sense
" Which tells him that the embrace of love

"Is o'er a gulf of difference
"Love cannot sound, nor death remove."

2.

This learn'd I, watching where she danced,
Native to melody and light,
And now and then toward me glanced,
Pleased, as I hoped, to please my sight.

3.

Ah, love to speak was impotent,
Till music did a tongue confer,
And I ne'er knew what music meant,
Until I danced to it with her.
Too proud of the sustaining power
Of my, till then, unblemish'd joy,
My passion, for reproof, that hour
Tasted mortality's alloy,
And bore me down an eddying gulf:
I wish'd the world might run to wreck,

So I but once might fling myself
About her beautiful white neck.
I ask'd her, would she waltz, a dance
We hated; and I saw the rays
Withdrawn, which did till then enhance
Her fairness with its thanks for praise.
She'd dance the next quadrille, then? "Yes."
"No," had not fall'n with half the force.
She was fulfil'd with gentleness,
And I with measureless remorse;
And, ere I slept, on bended knee
I own'd myself, with many a tear,
Unseasonable, disorderly,
And a deranger of love's sphere;
Gave thanks that, when we stumble and fall,
We hurt ourselves, and not the Truth,
And, rising, found its brightness all
The brighter through the tears of ruth.

4.

Nor was my hope that night made less,
Though order'd, humbled, and reproved:
Her farewell did her heart express
As much, but not with anger, moved:
My grief had all my soul betray'd;
And, in the night of my despair,
My love, a flower of noon afraid,
Divulged its fulness unaware.
I saw she saw: and, O, sweet Heaven,
Could my glad mind have credited
That influence had to me been given
To affect her so, I should have said
That, though she from herself conceal'd
Love's felt delight and fancied harm,
They made her face the jousting field
Of joy and beautiful alarm.

XII.

THE ABDICATION.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Chace.

1.

SHE wearies with an ill unknown;
In sleep she sobs and seems to float,
A water-lily, all alone
Within a lonely castle-moat;
And as the full-moon, spectral, lies
Within the crescent's gleaming arms,
The present shows her heedless eyes
A future dim with vague alarms:
She sees, and yet she scarcely sees;
For, life-in-life not yet begun,

Too many are life's mysteries
For thought to fix 'tward any one.

2.

She's told that maidens are by youths
Extremely honour'd and desired;
And sighs, "If those sweet tales be truths,
What bliss to be so much admired!"
The suitors come; she sees them grieve:
Her coldness fills them with despair:
She'd pity if she could believe:
She's sorry that she cannot care.

3.

Who's this that meets her on her way?
Comes he as enemy, or friend;
Or both? Her bosom seems to say
He cannot pass, and there an end.
Whom does he love? Does he confer
His heart on worth that answers his?

Perhaps he's come to worship her:
She fears, she hopes, she thinks he is

4.

Advancing stepless, quick, and still,
As in the grass a serpent glides,
He fascinates her fluttering will,
Then terrifies with dreadful strides:
At first, there's nothing to resist:
He fights with all the forms of peace,
He comes about her like a mist,
With subtle, swift, unseen increase;
And then, unlook'd for, strikes amain
Some stroke that frightens her to death;
And grows all harmlessness again,
Ere she can cry, or get her breath.
At times she stops, and stands at bay;
But he, in all more strong than she,
Subdues her with his pale dismay,
Or more admired audacity.

5.

All people speak of him with praise:
How wise his talk; how sweet his tone;
What manly worship in his gaze!
It nearly makes her heart his own.
With what an air he speaks her name:
His manner always recollects
Her sex: and still the woman's claim
Is taught its scope by his respects.
Her charms, perceived to prosper first
In his beloved advertencies,
When in her glass they are rehearsed,
Prove his most powerful allies.

6.

Ah, whither shall a maiden flee,
When a bold youth so swift pursues,
And siege of tenderest courtesy,
With hope perseverant, still renews!

Why fly so fast? Her flatter'd breast
Thanks him who finds her fair and good;
She loves her fears; veil'd joys arrest
The foolish terrors of her blood:
By secret, sweet degrees, her heart,
Vanquish'd, takes warmth from his desire.
She makes it more, with bashful art,
And fuels love's late dreaded fire.

7.

The gallant credit he accords
To all the signs of good in her,
Redeems itself; his praiseful words
What they attribute still confer.
Her heart is thrice as rich in bliss,
She's three times gentler than before:
He gains a right to call her his,
Now she through him is so much more!
Ah, might he, when by doubts aggrieved,
Behold his tokens next her breast,

At all his words and sighs perceived
  Against its blythe upheaval press'd.
But still she flies: should she be won,
  It must not be believed or thought
She yields: she's chased to death, undone,
  Surprised, and violently caught.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

TO love and want, ah, weal in woe;
To love and win, ah, woe in weal;
To feel so happy, and to know
We're so much happier than we feel!

2.

If I the first have bravely worn
A Lady's scarf for singing-robe,
May I, for my reward, be borne
To earth like Henry Frauenlob.

3.

Pure preludes of effectual peace
  Breathed 'mid the deafening din of war,
When that and noisier songs decease,
  The world will love you more and more.

IDYL XII.

THE ABDICATION.

1.

FROM little signs, like little stars,
Whose faint impression on the sense
The very looking straight at mars,
Or only seen by confluence;
From instinct of a mutual thought,
Whence sanctity of manners flow'd;
From chance unconscious, and from what
Concealment, overconscious, show'd;
Her wrist's less weight upon my arm,
Her lowlier mien; that match'd with this;

I found, and felt with strange alarm,
I stood committed to my bliss.

2.

I grew assured, before I ask'd,
That she'd be mine without reserve,
And in her unclaim'd graces bask'd,
At leisure, till the time should serve,
With just enough of dread to thrill
The hope, and make it trebly dear;
Thus loath to speak the word to kill
Either the hope or happy fear.

3.

Till once, through lanes returning late,
Her laughing sisters lagg'd behind;
And, ere we reach'd her father's gate,
We paused with one presentient mind;
And, in the dim and perfumed mist,
Their coming stay'd, who, blythe and free,

And very women, loved to assist
A lover's opportunity.

4.

Twice rose, twice died my trembling word:
The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
Spake time in music, and we heard
The chafers rustling in the limes.
Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood;
The warmth of her confided arm;
Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood;
Her pleasure in her power to charm;
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
The least seem'd most by blissful turn,
Blissful but that it pleased too much,
And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
It was as if a harp with wires
Was traversed by the breath I drew;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

5.

So Honor was to be my bride!
The hopeless heights of hope were scaled.
The summit won, I paused and sigh'd,
As if success itself had fail'd:
Assured of this surpassing hope,
(Too great to humble or to hurt
By any measuring of its scope
With my most utter non-desert,)
It seem'd as if my lips approach'd
To touch at Tantalus' reward,
And rashly on Eden life encroach'd,
Half-blinded by the flaming sword.

6.

The whole world's wealthiest and its best,
So fiercely follow'd, seem'd, when found,
Poor in its need to be possess'd,
Poor from its very want of bound.

By that consenting scared and shock'd,
Such change came o'er her mien and mood
That I felt startled and half-mock'd
As winning what I had not woo'd;
And my first motion was to disguise
My heart's fantastical annoy,
Lest she, discerning, should despise
Its small capacity for joy.

7.

My queen was crouching at my side,
By love unsceptred and brought low,
Her awful garb of maiden pride
All melted into tears like snow.
The mistress of my reverent thought,
Whose praise was all I ask'd of fame,
In my close-watch'd approval sought
Protection as from danger and blame.
Her spirit, which I loved to invest,
With pity for my poor desert,

Buried its face within my breast,
Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt.

8.

Sweet are the flatteries of love:
They neither would nor do deceive,
Albeit they lift our hearts above
All flatteries which our hearts believe:
But this of making me her lord
Appear'd such passionate excess,
I almost wish'd her state restored,
I almost wish'd she loved me less.
I was abash'd, and look'd aside
From honour I might not refuse,
Until I saw my shame was pride,
Since love in love discerns all dues,
And never of lesser payment speaks,
But loves to love for love's sole sake,
And in its object only seeks
That worth which love itself can wake.

9.

Of this high truth intelligent,
I buried soon, in the deep sea
Of a most near and dear content,
All pride and all humility:
So she beside me sat her down,
Excused from dignity and care,
And I submitted to the crown
No choice was left me but to wear.

THE EPILOGUE.

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1.

HIS "Book the First" so finish'd, Vaughan,
Elated with his partner's praise,
March'd laughing up and down the lawn,
With brows that seem'd to feel the bays.
She thought the Critics must admire
What seem'd to her such lovely rhymes!
"Nay," answer'd he, with rising ire,
As boding "Blackwood" and "The Times,"
"A bard may reckon his degree
"More high the more their welcome's foul;

" For music's mystic property
" Is to make dogs and critics howl.
" I'm not a chartist or a lord;
" To strut on stilts is not my use;
" And my vain claim to their good word
" Is nothing but a noble Muse.—
" But we'll not mind this modern curse
" Of petty printing wits, who class
" The pure gold of a perfect verse
" Below like bulk of lacquer'd brass!"
Then, boasting Songs to come, he said
The strains with which the next began
Pass'd all he'd written yet; and read
The opening verses. Thus they ran:

2.

" 'Tis so beyond conceiving sweet
" To love and be beloved in turn,
" That lovers talk, whene'er they meet,
" Only their joy to teach and learn.

"They tell how dearly they adore;
"Will not believe that they're believed;
"And tell the tidings o'er and o'er,
"And kiss to make their words conceived;
"And then take hands with sighs' soft speech
"And tell the same sweet tale again;
"The same sweet mystery learn and teach;
"And kiss and kiss to make it plain.
"Beloved tautologies of love!
"Which ever, ever both repeat;
"Which never, never seem to prove
"The point to either's fond conceit;
"Because, indeed,—"

3.

But here his Wife,
All praise till now, objected: "This,"
Said she, "you did not take from life:
"You should not make the lady kiss."
The fault confess'd with light demur,
Those lines he promised to remove,

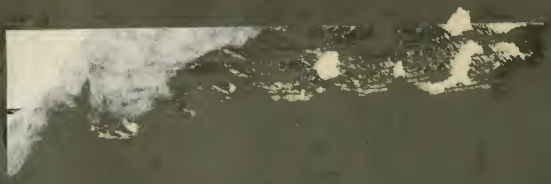
Fixing in colloquy with her,
As canons of their Court of Love:
" Like and like chime, same and same jar:
" If she to womanhood is true,
" To manhood he, their feelings are
" In difference match'd, like red and blue."

4.

Then, pondering what the difference was,
He ask'd her thrice if she'd be pleased
To help his Muse: but she grew cross,
And begg'd that she might not be teased.
" Well, till you tell me freely why
" You love me, you shall have no kiss;
" And so, till dinner-time, good-bye!"
Said he, sure to prevail by this.
She: " Dearest, you'll not leave me so!"
He: " Give the reasons, one and all."
She, laughing: " Love, I do not know,
" Unless it is that you're so tall."

On tiptoe, then, she stood to touch
His lips with her's, but three times miss'd,
And pouted. "Nay, then, tell how much?"
"How can I, if you'll not be kiss'd?"
Baffled, he thought the difference o'er;
Soon smiled, and said he knew it well:
But, good World, Love shows Poets more
Than you deserve that they should tell.

END OF THE BETROTHAL.



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